



**Scrutiny Committee
Informal online meeting**

16:30 to 18:30

16 December 2021

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Button (substitute for Councillor Everett) Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Osborn, Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister), Sands (M) (substitute for Councillor Manning) and Stutely

Apologies: Councillors Everett, Fulton-McAlister (M), Huntley, Manning, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Verbal update from the chair regarding the scrutiny conference on 1 December 2021

The chair had attended the Governance and Scrutiny conference on 1 December which was focussed on scrutiny and governance for local councils during challenging times.

The impact of the pandemic would be profound and long lasting so councils needed to think differently about risk. It showed the need to be realistic about services returning to pre-pandemic levels and that there was a role for communities to come together.

There was a panel discussion with the leader of Croydon Council, a local government adviser from CIPFA and the chair of the Riverside Housing scrutiny board, with the discussion being focussed on housing issues and how good scrutiny could help to avoid these. The Croydon investigation report and the CIPFA Financial Practice Scrutiny Guide were discussed and the chair would circulate links to these to members of the scrutiny committee. Information was also being collated from a series of workshops which would also be circulated once received.

A member asked what improvements Croydon Council had made around scrutiny. The chair answered that issues were still being worked through but it seemed that they were working to be more transparent as an organisation and were welcoming scrutiny

on different issues. There was a fundamental change in the way the organisation was operating.

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) note the update: and
- 2) circulate links to Croydon investigation report and the CIPFA Financial Practice Scrutiny Guide.

3. Verbal update on the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Committee

The NCCSPSSC did not meet and the representative would give an update once the meeting had been convened.

The chair invited Councillor Stutely, chair of the task and finish group looking at fly tipping and communal bins, to give an update on the work for the group instead.

Councillor Stutely said that the task and finish group had recently met with officers to discuss a draft report which set out a number of recommendations. Analysis of data collected over the past two years had showed a number of 'hotspots' around the city which gave geographical areas to target with new ideas.

The task and finish group were planning to hold a public meeting with residents from the city with a view to adding any additional ideas into the recommendations which would, in turn, be presented to a scrutiny committee meeting.

Members discussed the terms of reference of the task and finish group and Councillor Stutely commented that although these had been discussed, they were not formally written down and adopted which was a learning point for the next task and finish group. A member suggested that a standard terms of reference for task and finish groups could be developed and the monitoring officer answered that she would be please to support the committee in this piece of work, having had experience in similar documents from previous local authorities.

A member commented that the draft report focussed on fly tipping with less information on communal bins. Councillor Stutely said that this had been considered and communal bins were included within the draft recommendations.

The committee discussed the format of the public meeting. A tentative date of 21 January 2022 had been suggested and due to the ongoing pandemic, was likely that it would be held online. The task and finish group would listen to the views of members of the public and incorporate these into the recommendations.

The executive director of development and city services commented that the practicalities of this would need be thought through as recommendations would need to be aligned to the emerging budget and due to timing, this could be difficult.

RESOLVED to note the update of the task and finish group.

4. Equality information report

The chair introduced the item and said that the report was a statutory requirement with scrutiny committee feeding into the cabinet process. He welcomed officers and Councillor Waters to the meeting.

The strategy officer presented the report with the use of slides. She highlighted the duties of the council under the Equality Act 2012 and said that the report had been produced using infographics where possible to ensure it was accessible. The report also included data that was not a requirement of the reporting but gave context to the information.

The council had an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which set out its four main equality objectives and a review of equalities was being carried out to identify areas for improvement. The Local Government Association framework was used for this which would help to plan and implement real equality outcomes for the citizens of Norwich.

The head of HR and organisational development highlighted the work that had already been undertaken on the Workforce Strategy around equalities which included increased reporting of protected characteristics within the workforce, rolling out a number of training programmes on equality and diversity and unconscious bias and a review of job pages on the council website.

The ethnic diversity of the workforce had increased with the proportion of non-white employees increasing from 3% to 4.5%. The council was seeing improvements in recruitment statistics from applicants with disabilities and with ethnic minority backgrounds.

The strategy officer listed some of the organisations that would help to shape future equality information reports which included, Norfolk Community Law Service, Shelter, MAP, Youth Advisory Board, HKA Norwich, Equal Lives, Norfolk Citizen's Advice, Norwich Access Group, Norwich Door to Door, Better Together, Voluntary Norfolk, MIND, New Roots and Black History Month. Work had also started on developing a Citizen Participation Strategy.

Ben Spratling, graduate management trainee, gave a demonstration of the dashboard software which could be used to interrogate data. The latest data available was from the 2011 census but would be updated with 2021 data once it was available.

In response to a member's question regarding the pay rates for apprentices within the city council, the head of HR and organisational development replied that the council was a living wage employer and paid significantly more than the apprenticeship rates. Entry level apprentices were paid a minimum of £9.81 per hour and technical level apprentices were paid a variety of rates again at a minimum of £9.81 per hour.

A member asked if the head of HR and organisational development could set out some of the measures being taken to improve the diversity of council employees. The head of HR and organisational development identified some key themes which were around building an inclusive workforce, building an inclusive culture and workforce succession planning to retain talent pools. Service reviews were ongoing which included equality

impact assessments and diversity had increased at both shortlisting and offer stages of recruitment. The council had a duty to report on gender pay gap but also reported on ethnicity pay gap and the head of HR and organisational development confirmed that there was no ethnicity pay gap.

The chair commented on the 79.3% increase in the gender pay gap evident in the wider Norwich economy and asked what the reasons were for this. The graduate management trainee said that this was a national trend but was more pronounced in Norwich. The data was survey data rather than observed statistics with a narrow pool of participants. He identified that the reasons for this could only be speculated upon at this point and the data underlying the figures was not robust. The strategy officer added that research had been funded through the Norwich Good Economy Commission into the economic impacts of Covid-19 on women and the finding would be shared when available.

Members discussed the dashboard software and commented on it being a useful tool. The strategy officer said that it was still in development but would be shared once it was available.

In response to a member's question on the LSOAs, the graduate management trainee said that the finest data available was the LSOA and he was not aware of any more granular data.

A member referred to page 55 of the agenda and said that the City Reach service had been replaced by ad hoc GP services. City Reach was set up for homeless people and people migrating from other countries to be able to access vital services. She asked if there were any policies in place to monitor the new version of these services. The strategy officer said that City Reach was funded by the CCG but the council had the pathways service in place now. She would take the question to the appropriate officer for more information.

A member asked if future reports would give more detail around some of the dashboard figures and the reasons behind them – for example, child poverty was consistently very high. She commented that the scrutiny committee could work with some partner organisations to look at these issues in the round. The strategy officer replied that when developing an evidence base for future strategies around some of these issues, the council would draw on a host of available data sources to understand these complex topics. A partnership approach would be key to this work.

Councillor Waters commented that it was in the remit of the scrutiny committee to invite partners to work on topics and the council had the benefit of a rich partnership culture across the city. The data showed inequalities which the council was working hard to tackle to ensure that Norwich was an inclusive city. The chair added that the scrutiny committee had representation on the Norfolk Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee and could speak to colleagues at Norfolk County Council where there were issues across the functions of both councils.

A member referred to a report written by Friends of the Earth on access to green space and leisure facilities and asked if there had been any analysis of this issue alongside other forms of inequality. The strategy officer said that she was not aware of any

analysis but it was a report that could form the basis of discussions by the Norwich Climate Commission.

A member commented that there were high percentages of customers that declined to answer questions on protected characteristics when making complaints to the council and said that the data was important for equalities monitoring. The strategy officer replied that the existing complaints procedure did not require that information in order for the complaint to be submitted. Work was being undertaken on bringing customer data together and she would take this feedback to the head of service.

In response to a question around young mother rates in Norwich and what work was being done around this, the strategy officer said that she would speak to colleagues linked with health inequalities and circulate some information.

Officers were thanked for answering a number of questions in advance of the meeting and for their work on the report.

It was **RESOLVED** to:-

- 1) Acknowledge the work that has gone into the production of the dashboard, and welcome its future wider rollout,
- 2) Work with the housing partnerships officer to identify topics for scrutiny work around outreach to those who needed to access health and other services, such as legal services and education services.
- 3) Note the work being undertaken around the complaints process and ask for an update on improvements to data collection around protected characteristics.

(Councillors Maxwell and Button left at this point)

5. Scrutiny committee work programme 2021-22

The chair presented the report. Members had discussed under the previous item, inviting a representative of the LEP and the Norwich Good Economy Commission to its meeting in March 2022 looking at a sustainable and inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19 and asking that the committee pre-scrutinised both the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Citizen Participation Strategy. Councillor Galvin offered to complete TOPIC forms for these items to be considered.

The chair reminded members that there would be an additional meeting on 10 January 2022 to consider the NRL business plan prior to it being considered at the January cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the scrutiny committee work programme 2021-22; and

- 2) Ask Councillor Galvin to complete TOPIC forms on invitees to the March meeting of the scrutiny committee and the inclusion of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Citizen Participation Strategy.

CHAIR